

SPIRITUAL RESEARCH NETWORK

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL & ENCOURAGING BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT

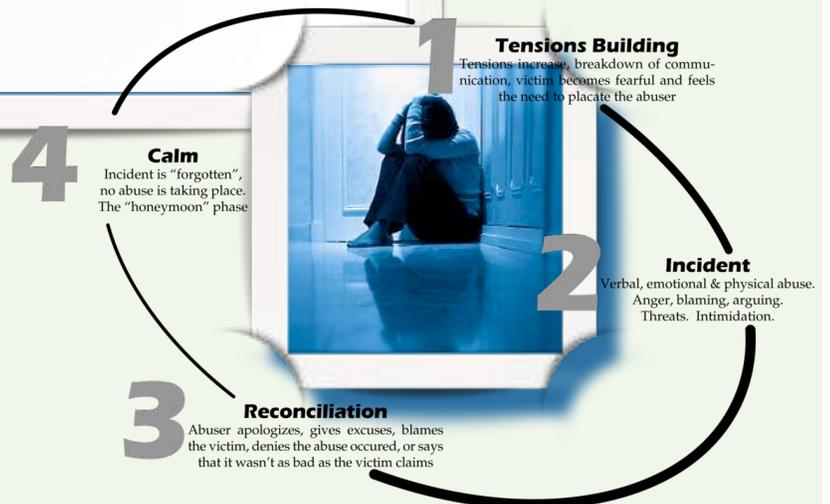
MARCH 2012

Spiritual Abuse & Group Dynamics Questions to Consider

Small Groups and the Dialectic Process
How to Find a Good Church Home

authority abuse
spiritual abuse
physical abuse
sexual abuse
elder abuse
child abuse
spousal abuse
employee abuse
psychological abuse

Cycle of Abuse





ABOUT CHRIS LAWSON

Chris Lawson is the Founder and Director of Spiritual Research Network (SRN). He is a missionary, pastor and Bible teacher and has been happily married since 1993. Chris and his family currently reside on the Central Coast of California, where they carry on their local ministry.

Formerly a Calvary Chapel pastor of fourteen years (1997-2011), Chris has been actively involved in church planting and overseas missions work since 1992. More recently, he began the Spiritual Research Network ministry (2004) as part of his Scotland Missions outreach (Edinburgh, Scotland).

While continuing to work on a degree in Biblical Theology through Tyndale Theological Seminary and Bible Institute, Chris teaches local Bible studies and periodic biblical discernment seminars. He also continues to work through the recovery process of a life changing back injury in the Fall of 2009.

The ministry of SRN, based on the following two scriptures, has served as a means for Chris to proclaim the Gospel. SRN has also served as a means to expose deception in and out of the church, and to help extend the visibility of fellow ministries and colleagues with balanced, proven track records..

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11, KJV).

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect [mature, whole, complete] in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Colossians 1:27-29, KJV).

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please continue to pray that the SRN would be a helpful resource for many people who are in Christian fellowships who are in great need of biblical discernment. We receive many e-mails and phone calls from people who are hurting and need answers on how to address problems with church leaders that are either undiscerning or who when called to account about strange doctrines, simply refuse to heed the biblically discerning people who are longing to see balance and sound teaching in the fellowship where they attend.

Thank you for your kind prayers and support of SRN.

ABOUT THE MINISTRY OF SRN

Proclaiming the Gospel and Encouraging Biblical Discernment!

Spiritual Research Network (SRN) researches, informs and warns about the dangers of cults, spiritual abuse and mysticism (occult) based spirituality.

Spiritual Research Network (SRN) is an independent Christian outreach that is committed first and foremost to the Lord Jesus Christ and the integrity of God's Word - The Holy Bible.

From its inception as a tiny missions outreach in Edinburgh, Scotland in 2004, the goal of SRN has been to provide a platform for outreach so that others may come to a deeper understanding of the love, grace and truth as it is found in the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ, as taught in Scripture.

MISSION

The mission of SRN is to encourage biblical discernment amongst those who consider themselves to be biblical Christians and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to nonbelievers. For these reasons we give great emphasis to the person, work and words of Jesus Christ in all of our activities.



PURPOSE

SRN exists in order to: **Glorify**, honor and serve the Lord Jesus Christ by living and proclaiming the biblical Gospel message without compromise; **Provide** evangelistic training and resources with an emphasis on the Bible as the verbally inspired Word of God, inerrant and infallible in the original manuscripts, and the supreme and final authority in matters of faith and life; **Expose** teachings that oppose, undermine and distort the biblical Gospel of God's grace as found in Scripture; **Contend** earnestly for the faith against those who compromise, suppress or reject doctrinal truth; and **Encourage** and support former members of other belief systems who have escaped spiritual deception and abuse.

WEBSITE and NEWSLETTER

The SRN *Website* and *Newsletter* serve as an extension of SRN's local ministry. The General Editor is Chris Lawson.

BELIEFS

SRN holds to the orthodox teachings of the historic Christian faith. SRN holds the following as *primary essentials* for Christian belief. “*The Five Basic Doctrines: 1) The Trinity: God is one "What" and three "Who's" with each "Who" possessing all the attributes of Deity and personality; 2) The Person of Jesus Christ: Jesus is 100% God and 100% man for all eternity; 3) The Second Coming: Jesus Christ is coming bodily to earth to rule and judge; 4) Salvation: It is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone; 5) The Scripture: It is entirely inerrant and sufficient for all Christian life.*” SRN *Statement of Faith* can be read online.

PROVISION

SRN is supported through the prayers and financial support of donors who share our concern for God's people and the lost. Accountability and transparency is our policy. **To help support the ministry of SRN please see our current donation details online.**

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Spiritual Abuse and Group Dynamics Questions to Consider

By Chris Lawson

*“I wrote unto the church:
but Diotrephes,
who loveth to have the preeminence among them,
receiveth us not.
Wherefore, if I come,
I will remember his deeds which he doeth,
prating against us with malicious words:
and not content therewith,
neither doth he himself receive the brethren,
and forbiddeth them that would,
and casteth them out of the church.”*

(3 John 9-10 KJV)

*“The prophets prophesy falsely,
and the priests bear rule by their means;
and my people love to have it so:
and what will ye do in the end thereof?”*
(Jeremiah 5:31 KJV)

The following list of questions is to help you, the reader, think through a number of things that perhaps you have never seriously considered on your own before.

As you read the questions, circle either YES or NO. When you reach the end, go back through the list and prayerfully consider the questions that you have answered YES to.

Answering YES to any of the following questions may be an indication of an unhealthy problem in your group or with your leaders.

Answering YES to more than just a few questions is a definite cause for alarm. If this is the case, it is recommended that you take a much closer look into your group's or organization's history, purpose, and goals. Observe closely the methods, activities, and lives of the leaders. Are they using abusive and manipulative tactics on people?

If you believe that you are being abused in any way, it is highly recommended that you seek immediate help from balanced individuals and relatives who are outside of the influence of your group and its leaders.

Remember, you have the freedom to make your own choices and to be free from controlling and manipulative people. Controlling, abusive, and manipulating people will only mock, chastise and attempt to control you even more when their ploys, methods and artful ways of controlling others have been exposed.

Lastly, if you are suffering physical harm in any way or are involved against your conscience in any activity, you have the freedom to call emergency personnel by dialing 911.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR CHURCH OR GROUP'S LEADERS

Are you in any way fearful of your leader(s)?
YES / NO

Does your church or group revolve around one main charismatic personality who is the final arbiter of "truth"?
YES / NO

Do your leaders make claims of being "Anointed," having "Elijah's Mantle," having "Apostolic Authority," etc?
YES / NO

Does the main leader, or the leaders in your church or group always insist that they are right?
YES / NO

Does your group, church or movement employ a "Moses/Aaron" style of leadership (Old Testament Theocracy) where the pastor/leader hears directly from God like "Moses" (unlike a plurality of elders that comprise church leadership as the New Testament emphasizes).
YES / NO

Does the pastor/leader of your group, church or movement surround himself with "people-pleasers," or with men who maintain biblical leadership characteristics as found in I, II Timothy and Titus?
YES / NO

Is your group, church or movement set up like a pyramid, with a hierarchy - with one single man at the top?
YES / NO

Are you allowed to freely ask questions about the background of your leader(s) and your group without being looked down upon or being considered "divisive"?
YES / NO

Would you be rebuked or chastised by your leader(s) if you researched the background and history of the group and its leader(s)?
YES / NO

Are you allowed to freely discuss teachings, prophecies, or so-called new revelations that your groups leader(s) has/have stated in the past or present?
YES / NO

Are you allowed to ask your leader(s) questions regarding their background in ministry, education, teaching, policies, etc.?
YES / NO

Do you view those who are assisting your group or church pastor/leader as ones who simply "do what they are told," or as people who can rationally think for themselves and if need be would not be afraid to the main leader(s) to account if questionable practices/teachings arise?
YES / NO

Are your leaders above reproach (without blame) in morals, ethics, teaching and financial issues?
YES / NO

Do any of your leaders have a criminal record?
YES / NO

Would your leader(s) freely allow you to research their background in order to find out if they have a criminal record?
YES / NO

Has anyone in your group ever tried to persuade you to NOT research the personal background of the leaders?
YES / NO

When issues are brought up about abusive situations, do your leaders say, "You just need to have more faith!," or "You are being disloyal to leadership!?"
YES / NO

Are leaders in your group very, very hard to contact or meet with?
YES / NO

Do your leaders avoid problematic issues? Or, when you discuss or address a real problem, do YOU then become targeted as THE problem, instead of the real issue that needs to be addressed?
YES / NO

Are your leaders aloof, unapproachable, unkind or harsh in any way to any of the people in your group?
YES / NO

Are your leaders amongst an "elite" class within your group?
YES / NO

Have your leaders ever told you or taught you that they are the only ones that can "rightly interpret" the Scriptures (Holy Bible)?
YES / NO

Do your leaders teach that your "church" or "movement" or "group" is the Only True Church?
YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR GROUP AND ITS TEACHINGS

Do you feel that your group twists and misapplies Bible verses?
YES / NO

Does your group or church "allegorize" and "spiritualize" Scripture instead of utilizing the internationally recognized standard of a literal, historical, grammatical approach to interpreting the Bible, like you would in any legitimate Bible college - and even a court of law before a judge and jury?
YES / NO

Are you told what you will believe?
YES / NO

Are you guided through the Bible and at the same time not allowed to study the Scriptures on your own, apart from your group's own materials?
YES / NO

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OPPORTUNITY. YOUR SUPPORT HELPS enable SRN's research and outreach ministry



REMEMBERING BELIEVERS: Bob and Linda, SRN PRAYER SUPPORT - U.K.
(Scottish Highlands, Argyll, Loch Fyne, Ardkinglas Woodland Gardens, January 2011)

How you can help!

SRN is supported by the prayers and donations of those who share our concern for the lost and who would like to see individuals and families remain steadfast in the Christian faith.

SRN is currently operating on an extremely limited budget. Our monthly operating costs include rent, web hosting fees, office supplies, printing and postage costs, and more.

SRN is in need of funding for a travel video projector, full-time missionary staff support, short term mission trips, and CD audio production materials. Our main need at this time is for staff support so that we can accomplish projects and move ahead with necessary ministry opportunities.

NEWSLETTER SIGN-UP and ONLINE DONATIONS

Spiritual Research Network is an independent ministry outreach of Chris Lawson.

One-time and recurring donations can be made online:

www.SpiritualResearchNetwork.com

www.Spiritual-Research-Network.com

(This page updated June 2014)

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Do your leaders claim “New Revelations,” or special “Words from God?”

YES / NO

Do your leaders withhold or avoid providing you and your group with a written “Statement of Beliefs” or “Statement of Faith”?

YES / NO

Is it difficult to get a straight answer from the group’s leader(s) on the group’s teachings?

YES / NO

Is your group secretive about any of its teachings, practices or meetings?

YES / NO

Does your group take “oaths” or have you commit to unrealistic expectations?

YES / NO

Are your leaders ever “harsh” in tone with you or do you ever feel like an animal that is “driven hard”?

YES / NO

Have you been taught, told or commanded not to share any of your group’s teachings, doctrines or practices with any outsiders?

YES / NO

Does your group encourage you to read the Bible on your own, apart from the group’s own interpretation of what it is teaching?

YES / NO

Have you ever been instructed to cut all ties with the past, with relatives (spouse, children, in-laws, etc.) or with friends upon joining the group?

YES / NO

Do your leaders favorably quote and endorse *known* false teachers and false teachings in their own sermons, messages and teaching?

YES / NO

Are the leaders in your group or church comprised of “yes men” who simply follow, submit to, and carry out the whims and desires of one man?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR GROUP OR CHURCH’S POLICIES

Does your group have any policies (or lack thereof) that allow leaders to use threats, pressures to conform, bribes, verbal abuse, etc.?

YES / NO

Would you say that your church’s or group’s policy on “discipline” is extreme? If so, why and how?

YES / NO

Is, or could, your group’s policy on “discipline” be dangerous, illegal, or abusive in any way?

YES / NO

Does your group restrict you from “visiting” other churches?

YES / NO

If you visit another church for a wedding, baptism, funeral or baby dedication would you get in trouble?

YES NO

If you were to ask valid, enquiring questions about your group’s policies, would this create relationship problems with the leaders?

YES / NO

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS ENABLE SRN’S RESEARCH AND OUTREACH!

WEBSITES

www.spiritual-research-network.com & www.spiritualresearchnetwork.com

E-UPDATES

Announcing: New SRN webpages, links to articles and book reviews, ministry updates, prayer requests, outreaches, warnings about dangerous spiritual practices, recommended reading, and more.

NEWSLETTERS

Research Articles, SRN Updates, Study Helps, Quotes, News Alerts, Recommended Resources and New Book Releases...

TEACHING SEMINARS!

Christian Apologetics, Bible Prophecy, Counter-Cult, Biblical Discernment, and more.

See our websites for details!

Does your group have any policies that you would consider harmful to children, the family unit, or society in general?

YES / NO

Does your group employ “out-loud shaming” of individuals and/or families?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR GROUP'S LITERATURE AND MULTI-MEDIA

Do you rely completely, without question, on the literature and information that your group gives you for your spiritual growth?

YES / NO

Will you be disciplined if you ever, at any time, listen to, read or view literature and multi-media materials that are not from your group, church or organization? Materials could include such things as books, journals, tracts, magazines, newsletters, CD's, DVD's, audio cassettes, videos, websites, etc.

YES / NO

Are you only allowed to use study aids, books, etc. that are from your group or organization?

YES / NO

Do your leaders ever communicate to you that only your organizations materials or “of God” and/or that your group alone is “God’s Organization.”

YES / NO

Have your leaders ever told you that all Bible study materials outside of your group are considered worldly, bad, apostate, “of the devil,” or evil?

YES / NO

If you are caught reading religious materials or assessments about your group, that are not published by your group, your group’s governing body or your organization’s headquarters, will you be disciplined?

YES / NO

Do your leaders speak down, mock, or show consistent disdain against Christian churches and Christian counter-cult research ministries?

YES / NO

If you were to visit your leaders and confront them regarding false prophecies they have made, or false teachings they have taught, do you think they would be angry, upset or frustrated that you came to show them their error?

YES / NO

Would you say that your leaders display lack of sorrow, lack of apology, and lack of repentance when they are confronted with real sin or abuse issues?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT MORALS AND ETHICS, HEALTH AND CONSCIENCE

Are you dependent upon the “approval” of your leaders for

what you do (i.e. what you eat, what you wear, where you go, what you say, who you spend time with, who you marry, the music you listen to, etc.)?

YES / NO

Do you feel as though your life (or ministry) is being “micromanaged” by others?

YES / NO

Do your leaders add unnecessary pressure to your decision making?

YES / NO

Are your leaders cruel, vindictive, intimidating or overbearing?

YES / NO

Do any of your leaders justify sexual immorality by telling you something like, “God told me it is OK!” or “The Lord revealed this to me!”?

YES / NO

Have you ever been instructed, led, or forced to partake in any type of sexual activity with any of your group’s leaders?

YES / NO

Are you or have you ever been commanded, forced, coerced, extorted or manipulated into financial giving, tithing, “sowing your seed-faith offering,” etc.?

YES / NO

Are you being physically injured in any way (molested, raped, abused, whipped, beaten, tied up, slapped, heavy handed “intimacy,” etc.)?

YES / NO

Does your church, group or organization employ sleep deprivation, deprive people of a balanced diet, or utilize dehydration, visualization, vitamin ingestion, enemas, etc. as a means to being more “spiritual”?

YES / NO

Have you been forced, manipulated, coerced or pressured into making any moral and ethical choices against your own will and conscience? If so, what? If so, by whom?

YES / NO

If you address a valid issue or concern regarding problems in leadership that are clearly unbiblical, do your leaders backpedal, shift the blame and/or insist that they are right and you are wrong?

YES / NO

When confronting a leaders(s) with a valid issue or concern, do they turn the whole thing around to the point where now you have become the problem, not the issue that needs to be dealt with?

YES / NO

Do your leaders or ministry helpers ever lie to you or try to cover up the lies of others leaders?

YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT MAKING PERSONAL CHOICES

Do you feel that you are manipulated against your own desires when making personal choices about diet, clothing, time commitments, service, tithing, friendships, dating, spouses, purchases, etc.?
YES / NO

Are choices ever made by your leaders that go against and burden your own conscience?
YES / NO

Do authority figures within your group ever demand answers from you or use threats to get their way?
YES / NO

Do your leaders or the group dynamic in your group make you feel as though you cannot come and go as you please (i.e. you feel as though you expected to be at all or most of the meetings)?
YES / NO

If you are experiencing abuse in any way, are you scared, afraid or nervous about leaving your group, church or organization?
YES / NO

Do your leaders, or the group itself, make choices to involve you in things that you don't like or would prefer not to be a part of?
YES / NO

Are you pressured or manipulated into making decisions – any decisions at all – regarding anything?
YES / NO

Do you feel guilty or “dirty” after making decisions because... “That is just what our group does.”
YES / NO

Do others in your group make any decisions for you? If so, what are they?
YES / NO

Is pressure put upon you, in any way, to avoid “outside information” about your group?
YES / NO

Are you fearful that if you make a “wrong choice” your leaders will punish you?
YES / NO

Have you ever been punished or abused in any of the following ways: Physically abused, out-loud verbal shaming in front of others, given the non-verbal “silent treatment,” coded non-verbal abuse (“the look”), financially mistreated or extorted and as a result suffered financial repercussions, sexually abused in any way, emotionally manipulated, purposefully betrayed, sexual innuendos, etc?
YES / NO

Are there spoken or unspoken “dress code rules” in your group, that if broken, will lead to “discipline”?
YES / NO

If you are a woman, are you taught or commanded that you must wear long skirts, must have long hair, must avoid all make-

up and must wear a head covering in order to please God?
YES / NO

Will your leaders or the group you belong to chastise you or refer to you as “carnal,” “less spiritual,” “un-submissive,” or “in rebellion” if you do not wear long skirts, have long hair, wear a head covering, avoid all make-up, etc.?
YES / NO

QUESTIONS ABOUT REGISTERED SEX-OFFENDERS BEING ALLOWED AROUND CHILDREN

Does your church, group or organization allow registered sex offenders (sexual predators) to be involved in children's or youth ministry?
YES / NO

Do your leaders break the law by allowing registered sex offenders to be anywhere in the vicinity of children?
YES / NO

If it is known by your leaders that a registered sex offender is attempting to visit (or is consistently attending) your group or church service, and is in the vicinity of children, do your leaders kindly remove the registered sex offender(s) from the premises in order to protect the children (and the offender from breaking probation)?
YES / NO

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT FINANCES

Are you allowed to enquire and ask valid questions as to how money is handled, where money is spent and who is accountable with your church or group finances?
YES / NO

Is your group secretive about where its financial funds go and how money is spent?
YES / NO

If you were to enquire about who counts and handles the money would your leader(s) show contempt towards you or look down on you with suspicion?
YES / NO

If your group is a church and/or holding services, and monies are received, does just one person or one married couple count and handle all the finances?
YES / NO

Have you ever been told by your leader(s) that no financial board is needed?
YES / NO

If your group is a church and/or holding services, and monies are received, do the leaders avoid filing annual tax documents with the Internal Revenue Service and Franchise Tax Board?
YES / NO

When money is received through offerings and/or collected through offering boxes, do you see that there is a lack of accountability with counting, processing and depositing funds?
YES / NO

If you have ever enquired about the financial accountability procedures in your church, group or organization, have your leaders expressed defensiveness of challenged you?
YES / NO

A FEW MORE QUESTIONS

Is there a high turnover rate of people coming to and then leaving your church or group?
YES / NO

Do you often hear stories of strife, bitterness and controversies within your group or its leadership?
YES / NO

Does your group consistently condemn people and churches outside your group as being “of the devil,” “satanic,” “servants of Satan,” “worldly,” etc.?
YES / NO

Does your church have the “We are the only true church” mentality?
YES / NO

Do you experience cruelty or abusive attitudes from leaders in your church or group?
YES / NO

Are the leading men in your church, group or organization too busy to spend time with their own families?
YES / NO

Is your group engaging in any of the following forms of mystical, New Age, occult or consciousness altering methodology *and/or unbiblical perversions of the gifts of the Spirit*: chanting, mysticism, contemplative centering prayer, yoga, meditation, uncontrollable laughter, unbiblical manifestations of “non-sensical” speaking in tongues, speaking in different dialects (languages/tongues) *without* proper interpretation, consciousness altering practices, visualization, guided imagery, Reiki, therapeutic touch, *transferable* anointing, shaking, jerking, heat in hands, electrical jolts, shocks and currents through the body, carpet time, holy laughter, group hysteria, “fire” tunnels, Word Faith - positive confession, “point of contact” prayers with candles, oils and fetishes, praying for/to the dead spontaneous yoga poses, etc.?
YES / NO

CONCLUSION

If these questions have helped you see clearly that you are involved in an abusive church, group or movement, you are encouraged to pro-actively make the decision to escape and be free from your abusers.

If you are in tears right now and filled with grief, sorrow and pain, please know that there is freedom ahead and there is a God in heaven who desires to break the chains of abuse, pain and hardship that you are in and have been through. God sees your silent tears, He understands your grief and He is willing and available to comfort your pain and distress. Your abusers do not represent the God of the Bible. Rather, they represent fallen humanity abusing authority - one of the primary things Jesus rebuked and confronted when He walked the earth.

Fearful or Joyful?

*“The fear of man bringeth a snare:
but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD
shall be safe.”*
(Proverbs 29:25)

*“Now the Lord is that Spirit:
and where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is **liberty** [freedom].”*
(2 Corinthians 3:17)

*“The LORD is my **strength** and my **shield**;
my heart trusted in him,
and I am **helped**:
therefore my heart greatly **rejoiceth**;
and with my song will I **praise him**.”*
(Psalm 28:7)

*“...for this day is holy unto our LORD:
neither **be ye sorry**;
for the **joy of the LORD is your strength**.”*
(Nehemiah 8:10b)

How to Find a Good Church Home

By Mike Oppenheimer of Let Us Reason Ministries
<http://www.letusreason.org/>

It's not the label on a church that makes it what it is, but the teachings and the people following Christ. Mormons say they have the name of Christ on their Church, therefore they are his Church. Anyone can put a name on the outside, and most do use the name of Christ but it's what is on the inside that counts. A certain denomination or non denomination may often mean it has a good reputation but it is no guarantee for Biblical accuracy. Do they have the life of Christ - is His Holy Spirit indwelling the people and the congregation, is the Bible believed and being taught and practiced? We do not just look for a church that teaches the Bible but a church that teaches the Bible correctly, the whole counsel of God and having the goal to live by it.

A church is composed of numerous elements. Without putting things in order of importance, the people are the church, not the building. When looking for a church to make it your home there are certain elements necessary for it to be healthy and of God. The foremost is that they uphold the Bible as their authority, being the Word of God. Do they teach *through* the Bible, not using *certain* doctrines but teaching the whole counsel of God? Is the church operating from Scripture as best as possible and are they feeding the sheep for growth in their spiritual lives to make them mature? Are they pursuing God's kingdom and His will for their lives as individuals and as a Church? Are they Christ

centered and preaching the gospel of grace through faith *alone* for salvation? Are they mission-minded? Is the Church centered on the needs of its people, not neglecting its own, especially those out on the mission-field? Are sheep producing sheep which will turn into growth for the Church, or are they relying only on the leaders to do the work of the ministry? Some churches turn over much of the ministry into the hands of the layman even if they are new to the faith. This saves them time in taking care of all the problems that arise, as well as money to pay for more ministers. The Bible teaches us not to do this, that one must be mature in the teachings of Christ as well as having maturity as persons, we are *not* to let a novice teach. There needs to be a balance in this philosophy of ministry. While many are attracted to opportunities to being in ministry, in the long run if a church is open to this it causes problems. The leaders are to be *proven men of the faith adhering to the Biblical requirements*.

Is there prayer for the needs of people and open for anyone to join in? Do they accept you for who you are *without conditions* and are willing to help you mature in Christ? Is giving freely encouraged or is there coercion on tithing and raising money. Are there open record where the money goes?

Is the gospel proclaimed regularly from the pulpit and people encouraged to share the gospel outside the assembly? Are they teaching the essentials of the faith to the new believers and right doctrine and practice for the mature to find their purpose in God (1 Tim.4:6, 13-16.) In finding a Christian church specific questions sometimes need to be answered. Such as do they accept the Bible as inerrant and infallible, that it has been preserved throughout history? Do they believe Jesus is the Son of God and what do they mean by this (almost all cults will agree with this on the outset). Is Christ *fully* God and *fully* man, did He raise from the dead *bodily*. Do they teach and uphold doctrine especially on the nature of Christ being God in the flesh and God being Triune in nature?

Do they have different weekly Bible studies one can attend so people can get to know one another and fellowship when they have time? Is there freedom in the church for people to exercise their spiritual gifts and talents to be used for each other and their community (1 Thess.5:19-20; 1 Cor. 12-14)? Are they looking for ministry opportunities as God moves in the lives of their individual members, are they encouraging people to pursue God's calling in their lives (1 Tim.1:9; Rom.8:28-30; Eph.2:10).

Does the church encourage you or help you to discern and answer false religious systems (1 Jn.4:1)? Do they teach how to witness to other religions, or do they feel that everyone can pursue God in any way they choose (Jude 3; 1 Pet.3:15)? Do they recognize the cults and are they equipping people to know the differences between what is true and what is error - and equipping them in apologetics to give them confidence in their witnessing to them (cultists)?

Sometimes one needs to ask for a history of where the church began and how. Who they are affiliated with? One may have to consult cult watch organizations for further information on their history and doctrines, it's always better

to ask first *before* you leap. Do they belong to the National Association of Evangelicals or the World Evangelical Fellowship, are they accountable to others? Do they work with and enjoy fellowship with other churches and denominations that are sound? What books do they promote for their members to read? Wisdom is needed so one should pray for all wisdom and discernment in their decision (Phil. 1:9), so that you don't spend your time there and find out later what you should have known beforehand.

Choosing a church may take time and sometimes caution may be necessary. A church is to be friendly but we can first be easily attracted to the warmth and friendliness of the people and later find they are theologically off. It's best to ask for a statement of faith, a creed and history, as well as questions before joining. Some faith statements do not mean what they say so one *needs to ask deeper questions* if there are any doubts. Best to know beforehand than invest your time and find out later. (The Mormon's *articles of faith* sound on the surface as evangelical - but are deceptive). Do they have a public Statement of Faith? Beware when a church says their statement of faith is the Bible and that is all they have (such as the International churches of Christ). You can consult various books such as *Elwell's Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions* by J. Gordon Melton or even the *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* by Burgess, Magee, and Alexander for further research on certain groups and movements.

If you find a church that is actively pursuing these things then you have probably found a healthy environment for your spiritual growth in Jesus Christ - you have found a good church home. Every church has a different flavor and one can find two churches that may teach the same things but have a different philosophy in *how* they do ministry. This can sometimes be a personal preference for you as an individual. Some believe in gifts, some do not, some have differences in eschatology (study of the end-times). Some churches believe in using instruments in their worship, others do not. Some sing the old hymns, others sing new songs with different styles of music. Again this becomes all personal preference as we look to find a church home. One must see if they are using worship and praise songs or entertainment to hype the people up to keep coming back. If there is room to grow and serve and the people love and genuinely care, that's a good place to be. We need to be in a place that we can grow together in and be used of God, not just fellowship or have things to *do*.

Remember that the people are the church, not a certain denomination, group or church building. Those who hold to the core doctrines *without aberrations* are in the body of Christ and we should accept them and be in unity with them.

SRN encourages readers to visit **Let Us Reason Ministries** at <http://www.letusreason.org/>. Mike Oppenheimer has written a vast amount of articles and produced DVD's and books on a wide range of issues facing the world and the church.

Turn to **page 20** to learn more about Mike Oppenheimer.

SRIN

Joyful: listening to the river flow. Ardinglas Garden, Argyll, Western Highlands, Scotland



BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT
- *THE MISSING JEWEL OF THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH!*

MARCH

Small Groups and the Dialectic Process

By Berit Kjos - Originally published March 2004 (*Spirit-Led or Purpose-Driven? Part 3*)

To see how the dialectic process is controlled by the "Total Quality Management" system, go to [Reinventing the World](#) & [The Mind-Changing Process](#)

Other articles in this series can be found online at Kjos Ministries (www.Crossroads.to)

[Part 1: Spirit Led or Purpose Driven](#)

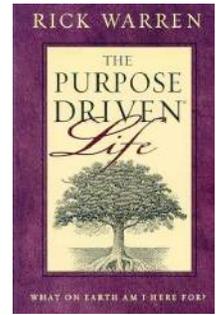
[Part 2: Unity and Community](#)

[Part 3: Spirit-Led or Purpose-Driven?](#)

[Part 4: Dealing with Resisters](#)

[Part 5: Spiritual Gifts](#)

[Part 6: Social Change](#)



"The importance of helping members develop friendships within your church cannot be overemphasized. Relationships are the glue that holds a church together." Rick Warren [\[2, page 324\]](#)

"**This book is about a process, not programs.** It offers a system for developing the people in your church and balancing the purposes of your church.... I'm confident the purpose-driven process can work in other churches where the pace of growth is more reasonable....

"Saddleback... grew large by using the **purpose-driven process**.... Healthy churches are built on a process, not on personalities." Rick Warren [\[2, page 69, 70\]](#)

* To understand the meaning of "healthy" in this context, see [The UN Plan for Your Mental Health](#)

"Encourage every member to join a small group," says Rick Warren. "... Not only do they help people connect with one another, they also allow your church to maintain a 'small church' feeling of fellowship as it grows. Small groups can provide the personal care and attention **every member deserves** no matter how big the church becomes.... In addition to being biblical, there are four benefits of using homes:

- They are infinitely expandable (homes are everywhere);
- They are unlimited geographically (you can minister to a wider area);
- It's good stewardship (you use buildings that other people pay for!) releasing more money for ministry; and
- It facilitates closer relationships (people are more relaxed in a home setting)."[\[4\]](#) Emphasis added

While we don't deserve any of God's gracious blessings, small groups do bring people together. So the issue here is not whether or not they are effective, but rather the *nature* of their effectiveness. Do they deepen our faith in God or our dependence on each other? Do they teach us to know and follow God's Word or do they promote subtle forms of compromise for the sake of unity in diversity? Do they encourage Biblical discernment or open-mindedness and tolerance for unbiblical beliefs and values? Finally, are they *led* by the Holy Spirit or *driven* by *well-trained facilitators* and the "*felt needs*" of the groups?

Today's facilitated small groups or teams are not like the old Bible studies many of us attended years ago. Back then, we *discussed* the Bible and its wonderful truths; now people *dialogue* until they reach an emotional form of unity based on "*empathy*" for diverse views and values. Dr. Robert Klench gave an excellent description of this process in his article, "[What's Wrong with the 21st Century Church?](#)"

"Total Quality Management [TQM] is based upon the Hegelian dialectic, invented by Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel, a transformational Marxist social psychologist. Briefly, the Hegelian dialectic process works like this: a diverse group of people (in the church, this is a mixture of believers (**thesis**) and unbelievers (**antithesis**), gather in a facilitated meeting (with a trained facilitator/teacher/group leader/change agent), using group dynamics (peer pressure), to discuss a social issue (or dialogue the Word of God), and reach a pre-determined outcome (consensus, compromise, or **synthesis**).

"When the Word of God is dialogued (as opposed to being taught didactically) between believers and unbelievers... and consensus is reached – agreement that all are comfortable with – then **the message of God's Word has been watered down** ever so slightly, and the **participants have been conditioned to accept** (and **even celebrate**) **their compromise** (synthesis). The new synthesis becomes the starting point (thesis) for the next meeting, and the process of continual change (innovation) continues.

"The fear of alienation from the group is the pressure that prevents an individual from standing firm for the truth of the Word of God, and such a one usually remains silent (self-editing). The fear of man (rejection) overrides the fear of God. The end result is a "paradigm shift" in how one processes factual information."

In the past, God's unchanging Word was the ultimate test of right and wrong and our goal was knowing God's will and aligning our thoughts to His truth. Now the goal is to bond diverse people into a "family" that must "respect" all kinds of Biblical interpretations and contrary opinions—even when conclusions clash with the Bible. The old guidelines for discussion were based on God's call for *agapeo* love, kindness, patience and scriptural integrity. Today's ground rules are based on humanistic psychology and manipulative guidelines for social transformation, "relational vitality," emotional unity and collective synergy.

Sounds complex and implausible, doesn't it? That's why Christians are being drawn into the dialectic process with little understanding of the real transformation that takes place both in churches and in individuals who participate in the new "systems thinking" and "outcome-based" or "purpose-driven" learning process.

Perhaps the best way to explain this transformation is to show some of the ways Pastor Rick Warren's small group process matches the change process outlined in a book titled *Leading Congregational Change (LCC)*. This book, largely inspired by Saddleback's success, gives us a detailed look at the change process itself. "This is a book you ought to read before you change anything," said Rick Warren in his hearty endorsement.

This book -- we will refer to it as *LCC* -- presents the dialectic process as part of a system. Its main model is Saddleback Church, where dialectic groups are led by facilitator-leaders trained in the psycho-social strategies of collective change.

The *LCC* shows us that the dialectic group doesn't operate in a vacuum. It's part of a system that controls the planned transformation with top-down standards for group values, relational skills and "service learning." It provides surveys, assessments and data tracking systems that continually measures "change" and monitors conformity to the set pattern. And it follows the same Total Quality Management model embraced by governments, corporations, education systems, the United Nations and other organizations around the world.

Leading Congregational Change (LCC) was written by James H. Furr, Mike Bonem, and Jim Herrington in 2000. Its publisher, [Jossey-Bass](#), has been working closely both with the [Peter Drucker Foundation](#) (now called Leader to Leader) and the "Christian" [Leadership Network](#) founded by **Bob Buford**. The latter serves as an international tool for guiding large churches through the process of "congregational transformation." Its references to Rick Warren include these comments:

"We thank Rick Warren... for the opportunity to reach and refine our understanding of congregational transformation as part of Saddleback Valley Church's Purpose-Driven Church Conference. We are also grateful to Bob Buford.... and others at Leadership Network for the many ways in which they have stimulated and facilitated our work.

"We were deeply influenced by Bill Hybles and Rick Warren and the successes of their congregations. We also saw many applications in [Peter Senge's](#) *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) and in John Kotter's *Leading Change* (1996)." [3, Acknowledgements]

"Pastor Russ Osterman... had an opportunity to attend a seminar at **Saddleback Community Church** in California. Seeing and experiencing the model of a dynamic congregation that was truly reaching uncharted people had a deep impact on Russ, and he returned to Glenwood a changed person. He had no experience in change leadership and no road map for how to lead congregational transformation.... [he] began to lead his church to embrace a new model based on what he had learned." [3, page 28]

That new model, demonstrated by Saddleback Community Church, is outlined in *LCC*. While the "change" process involves numerous complex "skills" and strategies such as *vision casting, system thinking, creative tension, self-assessment...* we will only look at those that specifically relate to small groups here.

Let's start with the new meaning of "small group" (or "team"). *LCC* defines it as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable." [3, page 128]

To validate this definition, the authors point to 1 Corinthians 12: "Paul declares that though we are many parts, we are one body." [3, page 128] But this Scripture *only* applies to the Body of Christ. It doesn't refer to the diverse members of small groups or teams made of believers and unbelievers who learn to empathize and identify with each other's values and lifestyles. During the last century, this dialectic process based on [Georg Hegel's occult philosophy](#) was embraced by Marx, Lenin and other socialist leaders. Today it's the centerpiece of all the world's management systems. Its purpose — which is *not* to nurture God's people—is to conform all minds to a global pattern for uniform "human resource development" in schools, business, governments and churches around the world. [See [Reinventing the World](#) and [Solidarity](#)]

In *LCC*, we read: "In a team... a **common goal** is set. These goals can only be achieved through the mutual, cooperative efforts of the members. ... A second distinction... is *accountability*. ... In a team, **each individual is responsible to the rest of the team.**" [3, page 131]

In Saddleback terminology, the "common goal" would be the common "purpose(s)." And in the *40 Days of Purpose study guide*, each group member agrees to be held accountable by signing a "Group Agreement." It begins with this statement and three points:

"We agree to the following values:"

- Clear Purpose: Grow *healthy* spiritual lives by building a *healthy* small group community
- Group Attendance: Give priority to the group meeting
- Safe Environment: Help *create a safe place* where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answer, snap judgments, or simple fixes).

This contract matches *LCC's* demand for group values or team guidelines. Rick Warren knows how to trade unpleasant words like "rules" for softer words such as "values." But in this context both words refer to same requirement: guidelines that all must follow:

Establish Values to Guide Team Interactions. "Before a team is launched, *ground rules* need to be established. Team members bring many unexpressed assumptions about what is and is not *acceptable in group interaction*. ... Openness, consensus, mutual respect, creativity, and diversity are some of the typical values of effective teams."

"... the importance of declaring a value and enforcing it repeatedly. Mastering team learning will be difficult if values are not made explicit.

"Another value to establish is the team's *boundary* conditions. These *define the outer limits of acceptability for new ideas*.... In some congregations, an underlying value is that only denominational programs and priorities can be considered. This and other similar boundaries should be exposed and discussed by the group. Doing so will help establish the team's values..." [3, page 135] Emphasis added

VISION or PURPOSE: The continual focus of the group must be its common *vision*. Pastor Warren uses the word "**purpose**" instead of vision, and—while it may line up more closely with a mission statement—it serves the same unifying purpose as the organizational vision, written to inspire and motivate all members to flow with the planned transformation process. In its chapter on "Discerning and Communicating the Vision," *LCC* states,

"Our definition of communicating the vision is a comprehensive, intentional, and ongoing set of activities that are undertaken throughout the transformation process to make the vision clear to the congregation. ...

"**Rick Warren** reinforces this theme when he says, 'Vision and purpose must be **restated every twenty-six** days to keep the church moving in the right direction [2, page 111]." [3, page 62]

Pastor Warren is more than faithful to that rule. The first lesson in *Small Group Study Guide* for the 40 Days of Purpose deals primarily with the word, *purpose*. Its focus is not on God but on "the consequences of not knowing your purpose." It warns the group that "without knowing your purpose, life will seem **TIRESOME... UNFULFILLING... UNCONTROLLABLE.**" Instead of studying the Bible, the group receives a lesson on the importance of "purpose." According to the group study guide, "knowing the purpose of your life will -

- "give your life **FOCUS.**"
- "**SIMPLIFY** your life."
- "increase **MOTIVATION** in your life."
- "**PREPARE YOU FOR ETERNITY.**"

In short, Warren is putting "first things first," just as *LCC* recommends:

"**Vision** is a description of God's preferred future of the congregation in three to five years. One of the *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*, according to **Steven Covey**, is '**putting first things first.**' This is the practice of allowing our long-term objective (vision) to guide our short-term actions (implementation). It also involves the discipline of **staying on course by avoiding unimportant diversions.**" [3, page 81]

The long-term objective is collective transformation. This transformation involves new ways of thinking, new ways of understanding one's place in the collective, and a new readiness to flow with the changes ahead. The people "stay on course" together by keeping their hearts and minds focused on the common vision or purpose. That vision -- which includes the hope of meeting "felt needs" and common desires -- is like the carrot dangling in front of a horse's mouth. It motivates the person to move forward in a planned direction. There's no final goal other than ongoing and unhindered transformation and conformity—i.e. continual change. And each part of the group or community must be so focused on the coveted carrot (with its offer of personal gratification) that together they embrace whatever new "mental model" (new worldview, paradigm or way of seeing reality) the facilitator or leader presents. The group or collective must learn to think and follow as *one*.

Aldous Huxley made some interesting observations about such social oneness in a book he wrote after Hitler shattered the utopian vision of a perfectly evolved human society. In *Brave New World Revisited*, he wrote,

"As Mr. William Whyte has shown in his remarkable book, *The Organization Man*, a new Social Ethic is replacing our traditional ethical system—the system in which the individual is primary. The key words in this Social Ethic are 'adjustment,' 'adaptation,' 'socially orientated behavior,' 'belongingness,' 'acquisition of social skills,' 'team work,' 'group living,' 'group loyalty,' 'group dynamics,' 'group thinking,' 'group creativity.'..."

"In the more efficient dictatorships of tomorrow there will probably be much less violence than under Hitler and Stalin. The future dictator's subjects will be painlessly regimented by a corps of highly trained social engineers...."

"Their behavior is determined, not by knowledge and reason, but by **feelings and unconscious drives**. It is in these drives and feelings that 'the roots of their positive as well as their negative attitudes are implanted.' To be successful a propagandist must learn how to manipulate these instincts and emotions.... Whoever wishes to win over the masses must know the key that will open the door of their hearts.'... [*Remember Rick Warren's initial community surveys of needs and wants*] Twenty years before Madison Avenue embarked upon 'Motivational Research,' Hitler was systematically exploring and **exploiting the secret fears and hopes, the cravings, anxieties and frustrations of the German masses.**"

"It is by manipulating 'hidden forces' that the advertising experts induce us to buy their wares—a toothpaste, a brand of cigarettes, a political candidate. ... 'All effective propaganda,' Hitler wrote, 'must be confined to a few bare necessities and then must be expressed in a few stereotyped formulas.' These stereotyped formulas must be constantly repeated, for **only constant repetition will finally succeed in imprinting an idea upon the memory of a crowd.**'..."

"In an age of ... accelerating over-organization and ever more efficient means of mass communication, how can we preserve the integrity and reassert the value of the human individual? ... A generation from now it may be too late to find an answer."^[5] Emphasis added

Now, almost fifty years later, the *Organization Man* -- and the [postmodern thinking](#) that supports it -- have become a reality. Individual thinking gives way to collective thinking under the skilled guidance of benevolent facilitators whose sophisticated strategies have been tested and proven in psycho-social laboratories, among low-income students and military guinea pigs, in corporations everywhere and, more recently, in God's churches around the world. The transformation is becoming universal -- and woe to [those who resist!](#) The new world view -- or "mental model" -- demands conformity to the new "values" or standards, not confrontation.

As LCC tells us, "Team learning makes active use of the skills associated with *mental models*. Beyond these, team learning requires

- close and transparent relationships
- an accepted and challenging goal
- collaborative approach for sharing and examining information.

"We refer to these three essential team learning skills as *team building*, *establishing performance challenges*, and *dialogue*."^[3, page 134] Let's take a closer look at those three vital skills:

1. **TEAM BUILDING.** "Staying on course" involves lots of repetitions. Part of the vision/purpose is an ever-deepening awareness of the collective nature of the group. All must find their place and meaning in the larger body — no matter how much it drifts away from God's truth and ways. As Pastor Warren wrote in *The Purpose Driven Life*: "You discover your role in life through your relationships with others. The Bible tells us, **'Each part gets its meaning from the body** as a whole, not the other way around."^[1, page 131] A few pages later, he adds,

"The Body of Christ, like our own body, is really a collection of many small cells. The life of the Body of Christ, like your body, is contained in the cells. For this reason every Christian needs to be involved in a small group within their church, whether it is a home fellowship group, a Sunday schools class or a Bible study. This is where the real community takes place..."^[1, page 139]

Pastor Warren's statements illustrate "systems thinking" in a church context. Yes, God wants us to be one with Himself and with each other: one family in Christ, all led by the Holy Spirit according to God's perfect plan. But when God's guidelines for His Body of believers are placed into the *context* of a secular management system -- and when each member is told to find its "meaning" or purpose in the collective "body" rather than in Jesus Christ, the Head of His body -- the Biblical ideal becomes little more than a tool to conform people to an unbiblical process. Let me try to explain.

In order to be "effective," the small groups involved in the 40 Days of Purpose must be diverse; they must mix more traditional church members with their invited neighbors and friends who may have no Biblical knowledge at all. This diversity is essential to the planned "learning" process. A 1969 report by the Behavioral Science Teacher Education Program (B-STEP)—a brainwashing program established and funded by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare to build global citizens for a socialist world—included two vital requirements: broad diversity and continual assessments:

"If BSTEP is to be functional beyond the specific sample of students it serves, then that sample should be representative of the diversity of American society. High priority is recommended to maintaining a student mix which includes: Students from urban, small towns, and rural backgrounds.... Broad racial and ethnic representation.... Broad range of academic achievement potential.... Students with diverse and unusual interests.... Representative ratio of males and females....

"Continual assessment of student progress is important in a permanence-based curriculum." [See [B-STEP - page 53](#)]

In fact, this "learning" process—whether used in schools or churches—has little to do with knowledge of traditional facts or Biblical truths. Instead it's aimed at developing group skills and "systems thinking" (seeing ourselves and everything else, not as individual people or projects, but as integrated parts of a greater whole). As people *learn* to empathize with each other within the diverse groups, the members gradually *learn* to set aside their old Bible-based assumptions, boundaries and divisive absolutes. The diverse members join their hearts, thoughts and feelings as one. They commit themselves to each other. This new, exciting oneness *feels* good. It also prompts the Christian members to ignore God's solemn warnings concerning compromise, conforming to the world, and being "yoked together with unbelievers." [See [2 Cor 6:12-18](#)] As LCC explains:

"In an effective team, differences create **synergy**. Rather than staying a safe distance apart, the **close working relationships** within a team **turn diversity into a source of strength**. ... Team building is the place to begin to **embrace the differences** that the team members bring." [[3, page 135](#)]

"In an environment of **trusting relationships, team collaboration** to set performance standards generates **creative tension** for the group.... The most challenging and potentially most important skill for teams is dialogue. These **three skills—teambuilding, performance challenges, and dialogue**—will accelerate the entire learning process for a team." [[3, page 142](#)] Emphasis added

Yes, those time-tested strategies for social engineering will indeed accelerate the "learning process." But the "measurable outcome" will be the blinded products of human manipulation, not the Body of Christ taught and established by the Holy Spirit.

2. **PERFORMANCE CHALLENGES (or measurable standards)**. In his teaching video for small group leaders involved in the 40 Days of Purpose, Pastor Warren calls for Health Assessments:

"Before you get into the video teaching and we start digging into the purposes, we want to take a moment to find out where people are spiritually.... Your health is never static. It needs to be regularly checked in order to ensure a lifetime of health.

"The same is true with your spiritual health and that is why we want to begin this second week with a brief "health" check using a simple tool called the **Purpose Driven Health Assessment**. Take a couple minutes... to fill out your own health assessment (found in the Group Resources in the Small Group Study Guide). Tally the numbers and note the areas that you are doing well in, and the growth areas. In the first few minutes of your group time, challenge the group to go through the same process. ...

"Here is an opportunity for you to model *authenticity* by sharing with the group where you are progressing and where you need to grow. Whatever the level is of your vulnerability and need for accountability will quickly become the norm in the group." [[6](#)]

In a non-threatening way, Pastor Warren has just introduced the group to an essential part of the change process: continual assessments. The health, growth and progress of every member must be recorded and monitored. This is where today's sophisticated high tech data systems fit into the Church Growth and Purpose Driven paradigm. [See [CMS in Part 1](#)] Every person, every step forward, every change must be recorded and tracked, analyzed and taken into account. The same is true of Outcome Based Education in schools, Al Gore's attempts at "reinventing government" and Total Quality Management in business around the world. All follow [Peter Drucker's](#) worldwide formula for business management.

LCC shows how the vision or purpose works together with continual assessments to accomplish the human and social transformation:

"**Suggested Actions to Foster Change**. "Ultimately, momentum for ongoing transformation is a function of two factors: the organization's ability to *continually assess current reality*, and its ability to create internal alignment around the vision....

"Recasting the vision is best done through periodic **assessments** with the vision community. They should address whether the vision needs to be revised in order to be consistent with their understanding of God's calling." [3, page 88]

Commitment to Learning. ...Change leaders should **assess the skills** of each member and try to create targeted learning experiences at every stage of the change process.

"Learning experiences must focus on more than transferring information. Team members should have opportunities to discuss new insights with each other. They should be challenged to draw implications from the learning experiences that are unique and helpful to them and their congregation. Critical skills will need to be revisited over and over.... Follow-up presentation and discussion is usually needed. Actual practice in applying the skill, constructive **feedback**... are essential for skill development." [3, page 134] Emphasis added

3. DIALOGUE: In the first of his weekly video lesson for leaders, Pastor Warren says, "I want you to discuss what we talk about each week, dialogue with each other, consider the implications, and plan some action steps as a result. The more you get involved and participate, the more benefit you'll receive from this spiritual growth series in the next six weeks."

Sounds good and true, doesn't it? Now consider *LCC's* explanation of dialogue. It quotes Dr. [Peter Senge](#), founder and Chairman of MIT's Society for Organizational Learning, who authored a bestselling book on systems thinking called *The Fifth Discipline* which has served as a worldwide guide on social and behavioral change.

"The purpose of *dialogue* is to go beyond any one individual's understanding" (Senge). In dialogue, **each** individual's understanding is made available to the entire group so that all learn....

"In *discussion*, an individual's perspective ... is presented with the objective of persuading the rest of the group.... In *dialogue*, an individual offers his or her perspective or assumptions for examination by the group. The object of dialogue is to *allow others to see what you see and why you see it, not to convince them*. Dialogue can create a rich understanding if information is shared openly and if *all participants listen deeply*.

"This can only be done in a *safe environment*.... If members of the group expect their views to be disregarded or used against them, dialogue will not occur. Defenses will go up or information will not be fully shared." [3, page 140]

Did you catch the difference between discussion and dialogue? A good discussion relies on facts and logic — solid information — to present a logical argument that might persuade others that something is true or right. But such a *didactic* discussion clashes with purposes of the *dialectic* group, which trains diverse minds (remember, everyone is encouraged to bring friends) to ignore offensive truths for the sake of unity. Each person must learn to share their hearts *authentically*, to "listen" *empathically*, to set aside divisive facts or Biblical standards, and to continually *synthesize* individual views and values into an ever evolving *common ground*. Naturally, this feel-good process blurs God's dividing line between good and bad, truth and error. [See [2 Timothy 4:3-4](#)]

As in [Soviet brainwashing](#), Gestalt therapy and the popular encounter groups of the sixties, each person must learn to be "authentic" and vulnerable—willing to freely share their personal feelings and confess their weaknesses. To encourage such authenticity, the facilitator must build a permissive, non-judgmental or "safe environment." Affirmation, celebration and often an all-inclusive view of God's promises help people feel at home—no matter what their beliefs, lifestyles and values.

But, you might ask, doesn't God call us to unity, empathy and authenticity (purity, honesty...)? Yes, He does. All who are born of His Spirit are one in Him. In contrast, there is no genuine unity between Christians and the world. Yet, God's enemies delight in using God's words in ways and contexts that twist their meanings and deceive God's people. At first, those deviations may seem so subtle that they escape notice. But with each compromise and distortion of truth, discernment lessens and the paradigm shift toward apostasy accelerates. [See [America's Spiritual Slide](#)]

The dialectic questions in the back of *The Purpose Driven Life* fit this process. The first two begin with "What do you think....?" and "What do you feel...?" None of the questions point to the Scriptures, instead all focus on subjective elements of Pastor Warren's five Purposes. They free members of the group to identify with subjective feelings and bond without fear of correction, no matter what their beliefs or lifestyles.

Since the 40 Days of Purpose program is only the first step in a non-ending process of group learning, it does little more than open the door, begin the training in dialectic thinking, demonstrate the oneness achieved in a facilitated encounter group, and build a hunger for more of the same kind of unity. Apparently, the majority of participants become so attached to the group (and to the unifying process) that they continue either with the same friends or in a new group with others whose lives have been "transformed."

Now take a look at the aims and ways of this process as explained in *LCC*. Notice its roots in Dr. Senge's unbiblical agenda for changing the world:

"Senge identifies **three key practices** for teams engaging in the practice of dialogue:

1. *"Participants Agree to Describe their Assumptions.* ...True *dialogue* allows team members to *examine one another's assumptions*. As this unfolds, participants often *develop new insights into the personal assumptions* that they bring to the process." [3, page 140]

2. *"Participants Agree to Treat One Another as Colleagues.* ...Senge observes that 'dialogue can occur only when a group of people see each other as colleagues in a mutual quest for deeper insight and clarity.' ... This practice serves teams most powerfully when individuals hold differing points of view." [3, page 141]

3. *"A Facilitator Holds Group Members to their Commitment to Dialogue.* ...Most groups overuse (discussion).... Changing this tendency ... requires commitment, practice and assistance. A facilitator can strengthen the group member's *ability to use dialogue by helping them establish ground rules* and calling them back to the rules when they slide from dialogue into discussion....

"Mastering the skill of dialogue is a painstaking process.... *Dialogue* is risky because it requires a high level of transparency and vulnerability from all participants, especially the team leader. ... dialogue significantly increases a team's ability to achieve the results that God desires." [3, page 142]

The next quote from *The Purpose Driven Life* illustrates the positive perceptions of small group fellowship. In a [Biblical context](#), it would represent the very best of Christian fellowship:

"In real fellowship people experience authenticity. Authentic fellowship is not superficial, surface-level chit-chat. It is genuine, heart-to-heart, sometimes gut-level sharing. It happens when people get honest about who they are and what is happening in their lives. They share their hurts, reveal their feelings, confess their failures, disclose their doubts, admit their fears, acknowledge their weaknesses, and ask for help and prayer." [1, page 139]

But, in the context of church growth and MIT's general systems theory, this prescribed authenticity fits right into *LCC's* transformational process:

"The gospel of Christ calls us to this kind of **authentic transparency**. Jesus modeled this self-awareness. He knew who he was... his purpose in life. He knew how his culture influenced him.

"Small groups of many kinds provide a safe setting for individuals to think out loud about themselves.

"Individuals who want to master the discipline of mental models begin by committing to a growing sense of self-awareness. This allows them to identify their mental models and test them against reality." [3, page 118]

The next two quotes place confession and authenticity, first, into an interfaith context and, second, into the overall process of Soviet brainwashing. Confession and authenticity has been vital to both.

"We think of **confession** as an act that should be carried out in secret, in the darkness of the confessional.... Yet the reality is that **every human being** is broken and vulnerable.

"**Vulnerability** is a two way street. Community requires the ability to **expose our wounds and weaknesses** to our fellow creatures." [7] [Look at Scott Peck's teaching in "[The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace](#)"]

"...classes had virtually stopped. Varieties of '*learning*' meetings were taking up all the time. The students were working on *confessions*, as were many of the faculty members....

"*Meetings* were being held in vacant rooms and open spaces wherever a group could gather to discuss, self-criticize, and confess." [8] [Read more about this process in [Brainwashing and "Education Reform"](#)]

Edward Hunter wrote his book on Soviet-style brainwashing after numerous personal interviews with victims of the Chinese "education reform." These survivors include Western missionaries, prisoners of war, teachers, and business men who were trained through cruel but sophisticated "brainwashing" tactics to betray their nation, embrace dialectic materialism, "confess" lies, and serve the Communist propaganda machine. In the end, he shows how some were able to resist the process.

In today's Church Growth Movement, resisters are usually sifted out fairly early in the process. In the next installment, we will look at some of the ways non-conformists are assessed, exposed, vilified and dismissed from the church family they have loved, served and supported.

"... in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

"...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned..." 2 Timothy 3:1-14

THREE KINDS of GROUP RELATIONSHIPS

	Biblical Fellowship & Christian Community	Human Friendship & Traditional Community	Dialectic Groups & Postmodern Community Example: Community-Making
	LED by the SPIRIT	DRIVEN by felt NEEDS	DRIVEN by organizational OUTCOMES or PURPOSES
Includes	"Born again" believers from all nations and cultures	All who choose to belong, share common interests and are accepted by the group	Diverse (spiritually & culturally) participants in the dialectic process
Foundation	God's Word and Spirit	Felt needs; natural desire to belong to a group	A pre-planned strategy and outcome (purpose) aimed at personal and social transformation
Goal	Love, faith and obedience to God, <i>agapeo</i> love for each other, unity in Christ	Build relationships, meet need for fellowship, have fun	Transformation: from former beliefs and values to an ever evolving group synthesis or consensus
Result	God is glorified through our worship, praise, service and oneness in Him.	Personal gratification, a sense of belonging, increased dependence on the group	Bonding of group members, willingness to compromise, changed beliefs and values, surrender of personal will & meaning to the group
Shows others	God's supernatural <i>agapeo</i> love	Human <i>phileo</i> love	Skill of facilitator, power of the dialectic process
Ultimate goal	Eternity with God	Rich relationships in this world	Achieving the vision of the ideal community

Next: [Part 4: Dealing with Resisters](#)

Endnotes:

1. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002). See "[Driven or Led?](#)"
2. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).
3. James H. Furr, Mike Bonem and Jim Herrington, *Leading Congregational Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000). [Peter Senge](#), the founder and Chairman of **MIT's Society for Organizational Learning**, a "global community of corporations, researchers, and consultants," authored the 1995 book on systems thinking, *The Fifth Discipline*, which presents today's process for social and behavioral change. The article, "[Peter Senge and the Learning Organization](#)" mentions Senge's emphasis on dialogue and shared vision. "It suggests a 'link here with the concerns and interests of [communitarian](#) thinkers." "Leader as teacher' is not about 'teaching' people how to achieve their vision," wrote Peter Senge. "It is about fostering learning, for everyone. Such leaders help people throughout the organization develop systemic understandings."
4. Rick Warren, "[Relationships hold your church together.](#)"<http://www.pastors.com/article.asp?ArtID=3917>
5. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 25-26, 41, 43-44.
6. Rick Warren, *40 Days of Purpose, Transcript of Small Group & Sunday School Teaching Video* (PurposeDriven, Saddleback Parkway, Lake Forest, CA), page 16.
7. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987); pages 69-70.
8. Edward Hunter, *Brainwashing* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1956), pages 50, 51.

About The Writers In This Publication

<http://www.spiritual-research-network.com/>

From Chris Lawson, SRN Editor:

SRN would like to extend thanks to each ministry/author who has granted us permission to re-publish their articles in our SRN Newsletter. Each ministry has its hands in numerous aspects of research and writing and as many researchers know, the amount of deceptions that need to be exposed are far too extensive for any one single ministry to cover. We appreciate the well researched writings of others and we believe that our SRN Newsletter readers will also.

We would like to encourage our readership to visit our colleagues' websites and to joyfully help assist their ministry efforts through financial and prayer support. None of the ministries that we re-publish articles from are in the ministry for money. This fact is revealed through their consistency in *telling tell the truth about what's going on in the church and the world, regardless of the consequences.*

SRN includes articles from fellow ministries in our newsletter because we believe that what we publish is pertinent to current issues facing individual believers as well as countless churches. SRN does not necessarily agree with every aspect of ministry or non-essential theological beliefs that our colleagues subscribe to, however, we do see eye-to-eye on all of the primary and essential doctrines of the historic Christian faith and we all seek to represent balanced and healthy ministry morals, ethics and practices that are based on Scripture.

SRN (and we believe our colleagues too) seeks to keep a well balanced approach to Christian theology, apologetics and eschatology as well as a firmly grounded and balanced approach to biblical hermeneutics (interpretation of Scripture). We reject extremes including but not limited to Replacement Theology, anti-Semitism, Third Wave heresies, hyper-Pentecostal "charismania", allegorical and neo-Gnostic perversions of Scripture. If any of our colleagues slide away from balanced ministry and scriptural morals and ethics, we will lovingly pursue their correction and restoration. - **SRN**

About Mike Oppenheimer Let Us Reason Ministries

<http://www.letusreason.org/>

From the Let Us Reason:

Missions & Purpose (Mike Oppenheimer)

Our purpose to those outside Christ

TO DELIVER = [The Gospel](#)

TO DEFINE = [What we believe](#)

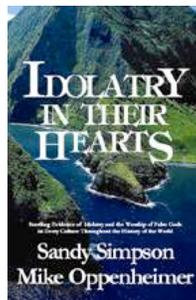
TO DEFEND = [The truth of the Word](#)

After doing cult evangelism for several years we saw the need to from an official ministry here in the Islands to reach out to the over ¼ of the adult population that is involved in different cults or false religions. We are one of the most active states (ex. 53,000 Mormons, and 7,000 Jehovah Witnesses going door to door (approximately 35,000 being trained). The cults outnumber the church 2 to 1 in our state and are growing rapidly here as well as everywhere else.

As psuedo Christian groups continue to grow we want to deter the free evangelization that is being done door to door each day week after week. In Mt. 24 Jesus warned his disciples and us about deception more than any other thing. He stated many will come in his name representing him in an untruthful manner. When this time comes many false prophets and teachers will be common. I believe what we are seeing today is prophecy being fulfilled. We are living in that time He has forewarned us about.

We have taken the initiative to do something about this in these Islands, that has not been done before. We have three main objectives.

Read more at Let Us Reason - <http://www.letusreason.org/>



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About Berit Kjos Crossroads

<http://www.crossroad.to/>

From Kjos Ministries:

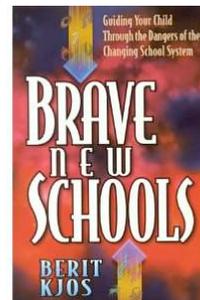
BIO sketch

(from Harvest House Publishers)

Berit Kjos is a respected researcher, the author of many books and magazine articles, and a concerned parent (and grandparent) who has extensively studied religious trends, today's social changes, the roots and branches of the United Nations, the rising worldwide management system, and – most alarming of all -- the transformation of the church.

Kjos first became aware of New Age and occult influences in our society at a 1974 conference on holistic health. As a registered nurse, she was interested in methods of healing, but soon discovered that the occult powers found in New Age methods brought bondage instead of true healing. As a parent, Kjos became aware of similar New Age influences in education. She began to monitor the schools for classroom programs that taught occultism and New Age spirituality, then began to share what she learned with other parents and teachers.....

Kjos' book, [Brave New Schools](#), surveys the scene in today's public schools and provides guidelines for parents who are concerned about their children's education. Kjos shows how myth, feeling, imagination, and politically correct stories are replacing truth, facts, logic, and history in the classroom. She... is also the author of [A Twist of Faith](#), [Your Child and the New Age](#), [Under the Spell of Mother Earth](#), and [A Wardrobe from the King](#)....



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